

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

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Joshua Lederberg

Dear Joshua:

Many thanks for your good letter of January 11. It suggests a number of thoughts on diverse subjects.

First, I was pleased and touched to see you quoted my "Competition in Creation" piece in your CIBA talk. It is a very bold talk, bolder than I would have dared to think of; and I am torn between suggesting that it ought to be suppressed and suggesting that it ought to have wider circulation, say at the "Harper's" level. Have you thought of that, or tried it?

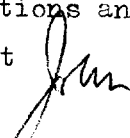
I am fascinated by your Multivator problem, which I had not seen spelled out in such detail before. You should have been at our UNESCO Conference in Buffalo in October, on "Amplification Techniques in Cell Biology". I don't know that any of those we discussed would have helped you much; nevertheless, to me, the term "amplification" is itself suggestive of an exhaustive cataloguing of available methods of study -- optical, electron-microscopic, physical, chemical -- at least at the terrestrial level. (I believe I sent you long ago my piece "Can Chemical Analysis of Single Cells be Improved?", Perspectives in Biol. and Med., 2, 24-45 (1958)) I will be interested in thinking about your problem, although I doubt that I would come up very quickly with anything you and your colleagues have not already discussed thoroughly. I would need to get more of a feel for how our thinking differs before I would know in which direction of intuition to look for overlooked ideas. I am off to an AIBS Conference on Cell Structure at Princeton February 10-13; maybe the talk there will trigger off some analytical cataloguing.

If I were to come to Stanford^{San}, the best time would be after that conference for a couple of weeks. I have to teach a class in Kinetic Theory from the end of March to Mid-June. I will be at the "Quantum Theory of Polypeptides, etc." conference at Stanford Biophysics the last week in March, but it will be a flying three-day trip between classes. Alternatively, and more satisfactorily from my point of view, I could come out this summer for a month or more, maybe with my family, if you or the other exobiologists would be around. I have an AEC Contract on "Quantum Theory of Excited States of Biological Pigment Molecules" that will pay for this summer visiting to any place with a good library and related interests.

As for the Ford Center Fellowships, I thought they were all on a one-year basis: if so, not for me.

Yours, for trigger operations and amplification,

John R. Platt



J.R.
Platt